

Basic Education in Tanzania: A Slight Touch on the Views of Nyerere on the Delivery of Primary Education in Tanzania

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Abstract: *The objective of this paper is to visualize what basic education is. To provide a focus to the paper, from 1997-2003, 198 primary seven leavers from Nachingwea and Tandahimba districts in the southern regions of Tanzania were sampled. Six simple questions from six conventional primary school subjects (Kiswahili, English, Geography, History, Science and Mathematics) were answered by sampled participants. The findings have revealed results which give signs of partial attainment of basic education among primary seven leavers in Tanzania. Basic education is in line with the idea of Education for All a movement spearheaded by UNESCO. Partial attainment of basic education among developing countries is challenged by a number of issues. But that partial attainment is pioneered by lack of sound educational policies on basic education. There is need therefore of educational goals/objectives to be directed to developing capabilities, and synchronize all ideas and activities to teacher education, curricula/syllabi, teaching and learning materials, type of assessments/examinations as well as putting into consideration issues arising in the global village. All in all, educators need exceptional attention in this movement. In a sentence, basic education is not about mastery of the 3Rs per se, but also the incorporation of the attainment of life skills capable of allowing one to make a living. In that respect, planning of basic education should involve the efforts of different stakeholders.*

Key words: Basic education, education for all, educational policies, teacher education, teaching, learning materials, and mastery of the 3Rs.

INTRODUCTION

According to Molt (1970) and Mann (1995), attempts to provide basic education for All in African countries began in the 1960s when most of these countries got their flag independence. As these countries emerged from colonialism, their economic status as well as levels of literacy were significantly low. A strategy of Education for All (EFA), as a measure of eradicating illiteracy, was - in a way, a big agenda to African societies. By then it was mainly the African continent which was lagging behind as far as formal education is concerned, with only 20 percent of the eligible children attending school. Universal basic education is regarded as a priority for developing countries in general. Universal basic education is a focus of Education for All movement (UNESCO, 2000). To make it more operational, the campaign is included in the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Stating and / or declaring visions at international level is one side of the coin, but the other side is whether different nations take up the pains of implementing such declarations. What is the reality in Africa, where internal stability in some nations is yet to be sought for? Can a peaceful atmosphere not be one of the crucial components in realizing what is being propagated at international forums about provision of Basic Education for All? What is happening in Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, and Libya and very recently in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)? A basic question which can be asked at this juncture is, what should Africa, (Tanzania included) do in creating a base for the attainment of basic education?

The overall objective of exploring what basic education means is to provide a new reflection on what really should be done to put in place a functional basic education. More specifically the paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify environmental aspects which intervene in proper delivery of basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, 3Rs;
- To examine the presence of frequent assessments for determining low achievers among primary school pupils; and
- To come up with recommendations on what should be done to promote the attainment of sustainable primary education in Tanzania.

Talking about basic education in Tanzania becomes too superficial if ideas of the first president Mwalimu Nyerere are not considered. In 1967 Nyerere very categorically defined education as incorporating four major strands. First he viewed education - which was being offered, as satisfying the needs of the minority. Close to that view, he wandered the type of basic education which was being offered. Secondly, he saw the danger of education becoming a sieving device for separating educated and illiterate communities. Thirdly, he saw the emphasis which was directed to passing examinations and certification as being a mis-conceptualization of the whole idea of functional education. And lastly, he noted that education emphasized preparation for white collar jobs, while denying practical knowledge and skills for the majority.

These views of Nyerere were actually challenging what is education? This is a difficult question which can not be answered in one or two sentences. Normally education is knowledge of having basic skills. But that alone is not enough; an educated man needs to have scientific, social attitudes as well as civic knowledge. In those days Nyerere saw the problem of emphasizing bookish knowledge, as being based on collecting information without understanding its value. Given that state of affairs, Nyerere posed the following thoughtful questions. If what is important is physical scientific knowledge, what about inspirational thoughts, visionary ambitions, creativity, risk, ability to bounce back from failure, motivation etc? (Kassam, 1995) Reading between lines, it can be noted that these skills are associated with the understanding of the value of knowledge, and not knowledge obtained for the purpose of grading and certification. After defining the nature of education - which prevailed after independence, Nyerere went further by explaining how basic education should contain.

Definition of Basic Education

A general focus on basic education relates to the whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings (formal, non-formal and informal), with the intention of meeting basic learning needs. Basic education in the Tanzanian context covers pre-primary, primary and adult education.

According to Nyerere basic education should prepare learners to rural life, provide life skills leading to sustainable life, be reflected in the content to be taught, examine the level of learnt skills than testing bookish knowledge for certification, be self sustaining as oppose to being a bridge to higher educational levels and produce confident, cooperative, critical thinking individuals, a stage which could be met by revamping approaches in teaching from didactic to constructivist methods (Kassam, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

The outlook of this paper is basically descriptive. It involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data by observing skills acquired by primary seven leavers in Tanzania and specifically in Nachingwea and Tandahimba districts. These two districts were purposely sampled because they had shown glaring pupil performance differences between them in Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) from 1997 to 2003.

The Design

In developing this paper, a qualitative approach was adopted to collect relevant information. The qualitative method in social studies has the ability of capturing feelings and actions with a view of interpreting them so as to develop insights and conclusions about them. It is a method based on descriptions of phenomena as influenced and determined by social constructs Patton, (1990); Lincoln and Guba, (1994); and Galt, (2009). This qualitative design approach enabled the author of the paper to collect relevant information for analyzing level of basic education attained by primary seven leavers in Nachingwea and Tandahimba districts.

The participants

Participants involved in this paper included primary seven leavers in a period of seven years (1997-2003). The participants were primarily sampled to respond to specific research questionnaires developed by the author of the paper, on aspects which influenced pupil performance in primary school leaving examination in Tanzania; with a special focus to Nachingwea and Tandahimba districts. After responding to formal research questionnaires participants were asked to respond to six simple open-ended questions. The questions were related to six subjects taught in primary schools: English, Kiswahili, Science, Geography, History and Mathematics. There were 198 participants in total; 106 participants from Nachingwea and 92 from Tandahimba.

Instruments used

Minimally six open-ended questions from basic subjects taught in primary schools; English language, Kiswahili, General science, Geography, History and Mathematics were used.

Questions

- (i) What is the name of your school?- (Taja jina la shule yako) For English language;
- (ii) What is a noun? (Nomino ni nini?) For Kiswahili;
- (iii) Mention any liquid you know? (Taja kimiminika chochote unachokijua) For science;
- (iv) What is a globe? (Tufe ni nini?) For Geography;
- (v) Mention the name of an ancient man. (Taja jina la mtu wa kale kabisa.) For History;
- (vi) Write formulae for calculating the area for a circle. (Andika njia ya kutafuta eneo la mduara) for mathematics.

Participants were supposed to respond to the questions by writing the correct information in the answer sheets provided.

Data treatment

Responses to these questions were mechanically worked out. To get correct responses, tallies were made to get figures for further analysis. Wrong responses were clustered, followed by counting the responses to get figures. As regards to participants who wrote nothing in their answer sheets, tallies were made to determine their numbers as well.

The Findings

For each question, responses of participants were rated under three categories as already hinted. The summaries of the responses in percentages are shown below.

Table 1: Findings regarding the name of your school.

District	Correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	27(25.6%)	08(7.50%)	69(67.0)	106
Tand.	20(21.7%)	10(10.9%)	62(67.4)	92

Source: Source: Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Table 2: Findings regarding what is a noun?

District	Correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	23(21.7%)	03(2.8%)	80(75.5)	106
Tand.	14(15.2%)	09(9.8%)	69(75.0)	92

Source: Source: Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Table 3: Findings regarding Mention any liquid you know (Taja Kimiminika Chochote Unachokijua)

District	Correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	06 (5.7%)	04(3.7%)	96(90.6)	106
Tand.	10(10.9%)	05(5.4%)	77(83.7)	92

Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Table 4: Findings regarding What is a globe? “Tufe ni nini?”

District	Correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	06(5.6%)	06(5.6%)	94(88.7)	106
Tand.	10(10.9%)	09(9.8%)	73(79.3)	92

Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Table 5: Findings regarding Mention the name of an ancient man on earth “Taja jina la mtu wa kale kabisa duniani.”

District	Correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	10(9.4%)	06(5.6%)	86(82.2)	106
Tand.	00(0.0%)	09(9.9%)	83(90.1)	92

Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Table 6: “Andika njia ya kutafuta eneo la mduara.” (Write the formulae for calculating an area of a circle)

District	correct/R	Wrong/R	No/R	Total
Nach.	08(7.6%)	07(6.6%)	91(85.8)	106
Tand.	01(1.1%)	08(8.7%)	83(90.2)	92

Source: Author, (1997-2003)

Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 indicate responses of primary school leavers on six subjects, namely: English, Kiswahili, Science, Geography, History and Mathematics. The responses were rated under correct response, wrong response, and no response. In summary all correct responses across the six subjects in the two districts had a score of 11.20 percent. Participants who responded to the questions with incorrect answers summed up to 7.50 percent. Participants who returned unanswered answer sheets amounted to 81.30 percent.

This information might look contradictory to the report of Makuwa (2010) on achievement trends in reading and mathematics in grade 6 pupils, in five Southern and Eastern Africa Consortiums for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ). The

countries are Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland and Tanzania. These countries had shown substantial improvement in performance in mathematics and language in the year 2000 and 2007. The report indicates that largest increases in average scores for reading were in Zanzibar (56 points), Namibia (48 points), and Mauritius (37 Points). In mathematics four countries, Lesotho, Namibia, Mauritius and Tanzania had registered increases in average scores of around 30 to 40 points. However, the two findings have one uncommon element. Whereas Makuwa (op.cit) is referring to actual school pupils, in this paper participants were the so called failures in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). For that matter, the findings are comparably different. As a way forward it would be helpful if SEACMEQ would carry out a study to determine quality of knowledge gained by primary school leavers in the sub-region.

Primary education in Tanzania is guided by specific educational objectives. One objective is, primary education should enable every child to acquire basic learning tools of literacy, communication, numeracy and problem solving as well as basic learning content of integrated relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for survival and development to full capacity (Sumra and Katabaro, 2014). Probably at this juncture, one could pose a question for discussion, as to what extent has primary school leavers in Tanzania benefited from an objective like this?

DISCUSSION

One may seem to be puzzled when looking at the findings in this paper. Is it possible for a pupil, who has been taught by trained teachers for a period of seven years to fail to mention the name of his/ her school - when asked in English? Could it be possible for such pupils to claim that they were not introduced to any simple English structure? What about different types of liquids? Wasn't this part of their subjects in the primary school curriculum? Was geography ever taught in primary schools? Was history skipped in the primary school timetables? Were pupils not prepared to attempt basic mathematics in their primary school leaving examination? Neither the reader of the paper, nor the author can come out with satisfactory answers to these questions.

One observer tried to give a general view on why pupils / students give wrong answers when asked questions saying that "when pupils/students give wrong answers, it is not so often that the answers they are giving are wrong...." Sometimes pupils / students give wrong answers because they have not understood a particular question (Holt, 1969). That could be true if such pupils / students had had no chance to ask about what the questions really demanded them to do. But in this situation participants had ample time and were given room to seek clarity before attempting the questions.

Had this been the case, one could also start to query whether such participants really did master skills in reading, writing and arithmetic (3Rs). Sumra (2010), while writing on "Are Our Children Learning in Schools" very emphatically said:

“The reality is that while in most parts of Tanzania there is a primary school for children to attend and teachers employed to teach them, schools are failing to deliver quality education. Most children lack even the most basic literacy and numeracy skills when they complete their primary education. The majority of children do not gain even Standard 2 level skills until they finish primary education. Many never learn these skills at all”.

This is a strange issue. Moses and Yamola (2012) for example - in their article in *Mwananchi* (p.1) reported about Primary School Leaving Examination results for the year 2012 arguing that the results for the (PSLE) for the year 2012 have portrayed a shameful image. Moses and Yamola (op.cit) further stressed that the majority selected to join government secondary schools had an average score of 40 percent and even lower than that. However, the government seems to postpone the agenda in favour of community secondary schools. A very simple logic is, a good farmer would always sow seeds which are of good quality, for an expectation of high harvest. Admitting poorly qualified students into what are termed as community secondary schools, or rather glorified primary schools, is the same as walking one step forward then two steps backward.

Emphasizing on creating a good base in the Tanzanian education system, Nyerere (1999) in his last words on education stressed that our education should be of good quality. Primary education - in particular, should be excellent for this is the only formal education that most Tanzanians were likely to receive by then. He further stressed that at present the quality of our primary education is appalling. We must do something about it, as a matter of National urgency. Apart from the fact that it is the education of the vast majority of the citizens of Tanzania, it is also the foundation of the whole of our Education System.

He ended his speech in Kiswahili words: “*Ndiyo Elimu ya MSINGI*”. Meaning; primary education. If it is poor the rest of our Education System is bound to suffer. Quality primary education cannot be realized as rains pouring from the blues. There are a lot of aspects involved in that respect. The education system must pave the way, including preparing quality personnel, and literate community. This idea coincides with his earlier thoughts when he defined basic education. He said basic education should be offered systematically. Each level reached should be evaluated so as to assist the mediocre learners, instead of making shifts of classrooms, with limited basic knowledge and skills. One observer in *Mwananchi* 21st December 2012 (op.cit) has remarked that students purposely admitted into government secondary schools with poor scores should be subjected to intensive remedial teaching. This is a mere waste of time; it is always difficult to bend smoothly a dried fish. That exercise should be done at the extreme lower levels in primary schools.

As an indication that ideas of Nyerere (op.cit) still demand a close follow up, Rwiza (2011) reported in a feature story in “*Mwananchi*” Friday 3rd June 2011 (p.3), where Warioba (The Retired Judge) very eloquently said:

“I think time has come we revisited our education policy and see how it reflects the nation we intend to establish otherwise there would be a disorganized nation in future... Without re-examining afresh our education policy current educational problems will not end. The issue of offering education of low quality is a catastrophe to our nation”.

The retired judge is emphasizing that it was high time a reflection was made on the education policy so as to set a new vision as regards the type of education and the nation we are trying to develop, otherwise the future would be blurred. As was hinted much earlier, the issue is how best to establish a viable basic education. If one has a sound basic education other educational levels will automatically be managed at easy. However, views of the retired judge need to be considered with a caution. It looks as if the advice is lately delivered, but still not too late to act. Considering the nation as a house which has caught fire, this state of affairs started slowly quit some years back, when the honourable judge was one of the key policy makers. If these exceptionally constructive ideas were activated by then, perhaps we would not have reached this helpless state, where for example pupils in primary schools end their period of schooling with limited knowledge and skills, which actually contradicts with the objectives of primary education in the blue print.

One of the objectives says that primary education has a function of enabling every child to acquire basic learning tools of literacy, communication, numeracy and problem solving as well as basic learning context of integrated relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes (URT, 1995). It might look as if objectives for primary education are ambitiously stated. If that being is the case, Warioba (op.cit) stressed that: “The current education system is political oriented at most, for that matter it cannot provide knowledge and skills needed to make our pupils/students be self-reliant”.

However, basing on such ideas - at this time, it is difficult, to rate the level of literacy reached by such primary seven leavers. Because primary schools have no official devices or mandate to declare who are high or low achievers formally. The current education system is emphasizing on the completion of years established for each education level, 2-7-4-2-3+ (URT, 1995). That is two years for pre-primary, seven years for primary education and four for ordinary secondary school education, two years advanced secondary school education and a minimum of three years and above for university education, depending on the programme one is registered. That being the case, it is doubtful to belief if the literacy attained through un-interrupted year shift kind of schooling could be maintained for a couple of years a head. Tomasevski (2003) observed that one striking feature in the campaign of Education for All is that in the 1990s, illiteracy globally was actually increasing at the rate of 2 percent per year. That connotes that even those who could be termed as semi-literates, are now relapsing into illiteracy. The participants in this paper are no exception. They could as well be in this category. People who would seemingly look literate in form, but in content illiterates.

Submitting blank sheets with no scribbles at all, one of the implications is lacking ability to read and write.

Kyando (2007) remarked that reading skills play a central role to the learning of an individual at school. The ability to read, write and understand instructions and text is a basic requirement of success in all school subjects. The importance of literacy skills does not, however, come to an end when children leave school. Such skills are a key to all areas of education and beyond, facilitating participation in the wider context of life long learning and contributing to individual's social integration and personal development. Given such a situation; where primary seven leavers cannot portray even the rudimentary learning skills; doubts on the quality of primary education being offered in Tanzania are inevitable. When an education system fails to deliver, it is the duty of the general public to raise alarms.

In response to public concern on the current education system in Tanzania, Nzogera (2011) wrote an article in *RAI*, published on 28th April, 2011(p. 7), with a heading, "*Elimu yetu inaelekea ukingoni*," meaning where is our education is leading to a dead end. The author of the article in *RAI* (op.cit), painfully comes up with very basic questions, for example, he questions introduction of French as a subject in primary schools in Tanzania. He asks how many teachers at the primary level have the ABC of French. For whose interest is the subject being introduced in the absence of the very rudimentary preparations? To offer basic education in French means more than informing the public eloquently that Tanzania is introducing French as a subject in primary schools. In the same magazine *RAI* on the same page, another observer noted only by one name, Glory (2011), notes that "*Wazazi tunatimiza wajibu wetu?*", meaning as parents do we really fulfil our obligatory roles - such as inspecting exercise books when children come back from school? Or how many parents take the pains of going to the teachers in primary schools and ask the progress of their children? Glory's views (op.cit) very closely resembles to several other scholars on the need to have an inter linkage between parents and the school in order to achieve viable basic education.

Gipps (1990) noted that if a child has been deprived to intellectual stimulation or educational opportunity, it is no wonder that intellectual performance will reflect this fact. And lastly Matheson (2009) cited Sharp and Green (1975), who emphasized that in an earlier analysis of home-school relations, primary school teachers generally expect parents to provide them with school trained children who have been socialized by their parents such that they easily take on their roles as pupils in the first few months of their schooling. This analysis of readiness to learn confirmed the view that parents with limited social and cultural capital are less likely to be able to produce school trained children. United Nations Literacy Decade emphasizes the need to consider different kinds of illiteracies in different cultures, especially in homes with illiterate parents. It can therefore be argued that, literacy can no longer be seen as just a technical skill of simply the ability to read and write (UNLD, 2003-2012).

Arguments raised above call for establishing a viable environment for attaining real basic education as opposed to mere elaborate policy statements. The Father of the nation Mwalimu Nyerere saw the need for basic adult education. Of late the emphasis from those who make decisions which matter on adult education is less pronounced. Jogwo (2010) writing on adult literacy the root of Africa's under-development emphasized that although there exist laudable policies and programmes for adult and non-formal education with a major emphasis on the eradication, or at least reduction of adult illiteracy, there appears to be a growing gap between theory and practice, policy and implementation. It is a common logic that culture is learnt and not related to instinct. Moreover it is also shared by individuals in a given society and is spread through interaction. Illiterate parents / guardians will inevitably influence their children. Given such a situation where parents and / or guardians are illiterates, is it very exceptional to find primary school leavers who fail to deliver what they gained in a period of seven years. Strange enough you might find that the first culprits in this saga might be teachers. But teachers make only a tip of an iceberg in this respect. To hit a nail on the head, one needs to look into the governing machinery as a whole. It cannot however, be limited to the ministry of education alone because inter-sectoral planning involves different stakeholders. In that respect, Cortez (1980), observed that the Third World learning societies, functionality in setting of the standards of quality education might be the key in understanding the reasons despite what and how much they know, individuals are not moved at all to respond to certain adverse circumstances or opportunities around them. This might, after all, be the main explanatory variable in the very weak links between education and social mobility. There are Third World nations which in a way have positive signs of moving towards attaining functional basic education; such countries includes, Philippines, Thailand and Morocco to name but some.

Taking Philippines as an example, in 1990 together with the rest of the world community, Tanzania included, affirmed their commitment to the World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien Thailand. In less than a year Philippines formulated its national Plan of Action for Education for all, which has been designed to be an anti-poverty programme through integrative planning. With this notion of integration in educational planning, one learns that it is not a matter of the Ministry of education, when it comes to laying the backbone for basic education. Basic education is an inter-sectoral phenomenon. It is not the issue of mastering the 3Rs alone as noted earlier. When a primary school pupil leaves schooling he/she should be able to keep bees and / or any other tame living birds / animals.

Not only that, but pupils should as well apply agricultural principles in farming, especially for crops within their location. Basic education should not be imparted through sporadic kind of strategies. the First Lady - Salma Kikwete, was Denis (2011) reported ,in *Tanzania Daima* of 17th June 2011 saying that: "Fifteen thousand books on safe mosquito nets "Kilimani Sesami" will be distributed to different primary schools across the country".

Let us ignore the number of books mentioned, and examine briefly the main idea of the message. Basic education about malaria is a serious issue. This should feature in the school curricula. Probably it might be seen that the issue is not the distribution of treated mosquito nets, but a culture of keeping the environment clean. When will the Tanzanian society come down to earth and learn for example that permanent stagnant stinking water in front of the residential houses at “*Tandale*” and / or “*Mtogole*” sub-divisions in Kinondoni Municipality is the main source of chronic malaria? Residents should be educated on how to solve main social problems rather than dealing with trivial issues or outcomes created by such problems.

Returning to Philippines, we find that, this country has broadened the means of access to basic education, by suggesting that all available instruments and channels of information, communication and social action should be used to convey essential knowledge for informing and educating people on all social issues including rules on safe usage of roads, emphasis added. For that matter, libraries in towns as well as in villages, radios and other media - in addition such devices could be mobilized towards meeting basic education needs.

That being the case, Tanzanian society has to tighten up her belt towards establishing opportunities which will enhance a friendly environment in maintaining level of literacy attained. If community secondary schools have no libraries, can you think of even having libraries for primary schools and / or villages? And if villages have no libraries, where then could new literates refresh their minds? Why shouldn't they relapse into illiteracy? In that respect there is a need of reflecting on what is known as lifelong learning and the ability to educate each one beyond the four walls of classrooms. One very central point to remember is that libraries in schools act as repositories of learning and knowledge exchange.

It is also important to bear in mind that a school without a library has no heart and failure to have a heart tempers with the blood circulation. Therefore the culture of establishing libraries in schools has to be revived and actually should be one of the binding core educational policies to be implemented continuously, regardless of national leadership change. In the case of Tanzania this probably will be activated by writing a new constitution in the near future. If Mwalimu Nyerere's ideas on basic education were to be strongly activated, probably the prevailing retrogressive situation on education as noted by Warioba (op.cit) could be avoided.

It is high time - for Tanzania as a nation, to put more emphasis on strengthening basic education. All good efforts of trying to offer secondary education to All, followed by tertiary education to the majority are bound to fail, because the base, primary education has loose ends. If primary education is of low quality, it follows that education at secondary and tertiary level will also be of very poor quality. In this world of globalization, the principle of survival of the fittest has an upper hand in almost all walks of life. In this global village, Tanzania is in the category of the developing world. As a nation, she has to make tough decisions touching on different basic needs. No

donor - what so ever, is needed to teach Tanzanians how to arrive at different basic decisions. Developing infrastructure for basic education using available resources is possible only if the country avoids embarking initiating overlapping education policies.

From time to time we should reflect on what should be done, so as to see what has been attained as regards basic education - and if not, why? Relying on enrolment figures or on well-designed architectural buildings - as a measure of attaining quality basic education, amounts to adding more frustrations to the existing system. In a feature story, emphasizing on quality education being based on other aspects more than infrastructure, Rwiza (2011) quoted Mkumbo of the University of Dar-es-Salaam in *Mwananchi* of 17th May 2011 (p.2) who saying that: "There is a group of children who got their education seated under the trees and they managed to do better. However that depended on how they were prepared and the kind of orientation they were given on how to adjust to that environment".

Perhaps in this respect Mkumbo (op.cit) would have further clarified by saying that guidance and counselling came from teachers who themselves accepted the environment and were really devoted. The author of this paper remembers his old days where primary one and two were seated on *logs* in one classroom but with a mannered, contended, factual, and consistent teacher.

REMARKS

Generally this paper has been exploring what basic education is. The first stage of mastering formal basic education, one has to have permanent knowledge and skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Secondly, mastery of basic education has to equip who ever obtains it, the ability to manipulate environment for better living. The six simple questions from six primary school subjects, answered by primary seven leavers in Nachingwea and Tandahimba, has revealed presence of doubts whether those who complete primary education in Tanzania really get the intended formal basic education. If one considers access to basic education in terms of enrolment, attractive structures and / or teaching and learning equipment, then that conception is rather doubtful.

Woods and Woods (2009) observed that what should be emphasized in basic education is participation and what one gets out of schooling. Putting it differently it could be said that a major education policy challenge in Tanzania is to have basic education goals focused on capabilities, and organize everything else (teacher education, curriculum, textbooks, libraries, examinations, inspection, use of mobile phones, internet and other technology) around this seriously. Teachers will need to be at the heart of this transformation, and therefore must be meaningfully involved from the beginning and throughout. This is the right time to do it. The question is whether the Government, its development partners, and the civil society is ready to accept such changes. Actually access to basic education should encompass equal distribution of resources both human and material in the learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the learning outcomes noted in this paper, the author concludes that failure of primary seven leavers to master the rudimentary skills in 3Rs were probably instigated by first, presence of educationally infertile home backgrounds an environment which possibly retarded the culture of learning. Secondly, the learning environment both at school and in the community around was probably not stimulating for encouraging primary seven leavers seek more knowledge. Thirdly, the content being taught was probably not stimulating, to the extent that one attended school because it was compulsory. Fourthly, there might be some inherent differences among primary school teachers. If that being the case, teachers could as well teach for the purpose of satisfying their immediate needs. Fifthly, it seems as if learning outcomes were not assessed at an appropriate time. If that was done the mediocre pupils would have been identified and corrective measures taken thereafter. And lastly, attainment of basic education among other necessities would involve assessment of all primary education objectives. The emphasis appears to be preparation of children to the second level of education, which mainly is the benefit of the minority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With these conclusions, the paper recommends; first, there is need to enrich pupils' home backgrounds for better learning, parents should be encouraged to cultivate a culture of learning in their homes. It might take time but there is no simple answer to the issue of awareness; an illiterate home act as a retrogressive aspect in promoting permanent literacy. Secondly, to prepare a stimulating environment for better leaning, primary schools should establish well stocked libraries; the same could be done at village and ward levels. This culture has to be cultivated at all costs. Talking about improving quality of education at secondary and tertiary levels without a strong basic education is a waist of time and resources.

Thirdly, as regards to stimulating content, traditional subjects need to be coated with knowledge and skills capable of solving common societal problems. At primary level, such knowledge and skills should first be environmental as well as common trades. In the process of trying to gain such experiences, permanent mastery of the 3Rs will follow suit. Fourthly, concerning teachers, the paper recommends; one, strict control of entry qualifications; two, training period of not less than two years with proper teaching practice assessments. And after training, equality in the distribution of teachers should be observed. As regards to teacher development, intensive in-service courses should be put in place. Teaching based on experience a lone, is bound to be overtaken by events. More importantly, to attract more competent teachers' policy on remunerations should be revisited. Shouting about enrolling teacher trainees with first and second class passes, might amount to zero or political utterances, if a take home for teachers will persistently remain low.

Fifthly, at the primary level, before entering into the next class, proper assessments leading to evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching should be formed. Thinking, that the level of comprehension among pupils is the same,

is educationally un-ethical. There is need therefore to establish formal assessments class wise, so as to determine high and low achievers. Low achievers should be given proper remedial teaching before they reach standard seven. And lastly, as regards to lack of assessing all primary education objectives, the system of assessment should be overhauled. Other instruments should be devised capable of assessing different skills formally at the primary level. A pencil and paper, type of summative assessment in the primary school leaving examination, which mostly examines what one can recall and / or memorize leans more on the general side than specificity.

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